

Introduction 1

1.1 Background

The Southwest Downtown Plan Area (Plan Area) is bounded by IH-35 to the west, Round Rock Avenue to the north, Mays Street to the east, McNeil Road to the southeast and Lake Creek to the southwest.

Figure 1.1: Aerial photograph with boundaries of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area



As a mature, suburban community straddling a major transportation corridor, Round Rock has had to respond to constant pressure for change. Current development standards for the City, including the Southwest Downtown Plan Area, are geared towards contemporary larger-lot development. These standards cannot support the redevelopment occurring in the Plan Area because they do

not accommodate the traditional neighborhood feel of one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City. Through a series of public workshops, the Planning and Community Development Department has gathered input from the neighborhood on a variety of topics. Based on this input, the Southwest Downtown Plan will provide guidelines and criteria for new development and for the redevelopment of existing properties and public space in the Plan Area.

The City is constructing the Municipal Office Complex (MOC) on property bounded by McNeil Road, Lake Creek, Harris Street, Bagdad Street, and Brown Street. The McConico Building, the first building completed for the project, houses the City offices for Municipal Courts, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Community Development. The building was completed in April 2003. The campus construction will include a new City Hall (to be completed in late 2008) and associated government buildings, parking facilities, and street, drainage, sidewalk, utility, and landscaping improvements. A Senior Activity Center and two-level parking garage will be located at 333 West Bagdad Avenue within the MOC. The new Senior Activity Center will allow Staff to develop new, more diverse programming, as well as increase membership and participation. The new Senior Activity Center is expected to be completed in 2005 and will replace the existing facility located on East Main Street. A Parks and Recreation building is proposed for construction at some point in the future, as funding allows.



Figure 1.2: Municipal Office Complex site diagram



Figure 1.3: Preliminary rendering of the new Senior Activity Center with the McConico building to the right. The Center is currently under construction. *Rendering: Spencer Godfrey Architects*



Figure 1.4: When completed, the Municipal Office Complex will consist of City office buildings around a civic plaza (aerial view from over Brown Street looking south). *Rendering: PageSoutherlandPage*

1.2 Purpose

The Southwest Downtown Plan (the Plan) presents recommendations to revitalize and enhance the Southwest Downtown Plan Area of Round Rock. The Plan highlights this older neighborhood in Round Rock by examining its small town feel, historic character, and human scale. At the same time, the Plan encourages the development of a thriving multi-faceted hub of city government and economic activity that reflects quality in its built environment and in the retail and services provided. In addition, the Plan encourages a range of residential housing types. This Plan presents opportunities for a mixture of land uses and for street improvements that support the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The Southwest Downtown Plan's public input process evolved out of the efforts of the City and those that live, work and own property in the Plan Area. The results are the Southwest Downtown Plan document, with numerous recommendations and implementation strategies, and a proposed mixed-use zoning ordinance that will provide regulatory and design guidance to public and private decision-makers.

1.3 Current Conditions & Land Use

Round Rock's downtown developed in a traditional pattern of small square blocks, with streets running north-south and avenues and alleys running east-west. The Plan Area is approximately twelve blocks of the original downtown, platted in 1876. Round Rock Avenue and McNeil Road are diagonal streets which both provide access to the IH-35 freeway frontage and define the northern and southern boundaries of the Plan Area. Round Rock Avenue was the original road between the first settlement of Round Rock on the Chisholm Trail west of IH-35 ("Old Town") and downtown ("New Town") where a railroad station once was located. The east and west boundaries of the twelve-block area are marked by Mays Street and IH-35. Lake Creek defines the southwestern edge of the Plan Area, separating the Plan



Figure 1.5: Southwest portion of the original 1876 downtown plat. The site of the former railroad station is on the lower right.

Area from recently constructed hotels located between Lake Creek and the IH-35 frontage road.

Retail in the Plan Area is concentrated in a block of attached storefronts in the one hundred block of West Main Street. These storefronts were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s, later than those in the main downtown historic district. They do not have the upper stories or stone facades that many of the historic structures do. Other commercial and automotive establishments extend north and south along Mays Street (US 81), which was the main road between Georgetown and Austin until the construction of Interstate Highway 35.

Further west from the commercial district and toward Lake Creek, most of the buildings are one-story houses built between 1910 and 1960. Several are still single-family residences, but most have been converted to small professional offices. Three of the larger houses have been converted to office suites. Owners converting their properties to commercial uses have been required to provide parking, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters to serve their establishments. This has created an inconsistent patchwork of street improvements and parking arrangements in the Plan Area.

The Plan Area is fortunate to have many large trees as an asset, including numerous oaks with trunks over eighteen inches in diameter. In a survey of area residents, employees and property owners, respondents noted trees as one of the Plan Area's most attractive and distinguishing features (see Appendix B, Survey Results).

1.4 Goals of the Plan

The overall objective of the Southwest Downtown Plan is to accommodate change within the Plan Area. This should be accomplished while taking into account several goals which were developed based on the scope of the project, including the proposed public investment in the Plan Area, the role of the Planning and Community Development Department in developing a plan for Southwest Downtown, and the input received from the



Figure 1.6: The 100 block of West Main Street



Figure 1.7: Two examples of houses converted to professional offices



Figure 1.8: Most streets lack curbs and gutters; drainage is a problem.

public throughout the planning process. The following list of goals was developed at one of the neighborhood public workshops.

The objective of the Southwest Downtown Plan is to accommodate change in the Plan Area while achieving the following goals, which include:

- Incorporating public input in the planning process
- Revitalizing the district's infrastructure, including streets, curbs, sidewalks, utilities and drainage
- Accommodating existing single-family residences by examining the compatibility of land uses
- Providing for new uses and for the redevelopment of existing buildings
- Increasing public and private parking
- Protecting and enhancing the special character of the area
- Creating a pedestrian-friendly environment

The following chapters and the recommendations within provide the elements necessary to accommodate change in the Plan Area while meeting these goals.

